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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 001164

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: POLISH FOREIGN MINISTER LOOKS FOR "STRATEGIC ASSURANCE" (C)

REF: WARSAW 1139

Classified By: Ambassador Lee Feinstein; Reason 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski told the Ambassador on November 20 that negotiations over the U.S.-Polish Supplemental SoFA Agreement are "done." The Foreign Minister did not mention Prime Minister Tusk having approved the SoFA text, as required, but left the strong impression that he believed Tusk had or was about to do so. Sikorski pushed for follow-up on Vice President Biden's October 22 commitment to provide U.S. "strategic assurance" to Poland. He said the GoP views rotations of U.S. F-16 aircraft to Poland as the best of the earlier proposed options for boosting the U.S. presence in Poland. At the heart of Poland's security concerns is Russia -- Sikorski termed a Russian attack on Ukraine a low-probability, high-risk event that would likely drag in Poland, if it occurred. Turning to democracy promotion efforts, he asked for an early read on Washington's inclination to participate in the Community of Democracies event in Krakow in 2010 at a high level. He also pushed for a meeting of heads of government in Washington in the first quarter of 2010, and asked to meet the Secretary on the margins of the December 3-4 NATO Ministerial. END SUMMARY.

SOFA READY TO SIGN

12. (C) During a cordial, nearly two hour luncheon on November 20, Foreign Minister Sikorski told the Ambassador that, after twelve plenary rounds, negotiations on the Supplemental SoFA agreement are "done." He said there had been some discussion within the GoP of waiting to sign the agreement until the Prime Minister visits Washington, but the Foreign Minister's "personal view" is that the agreement should be signed at a ceremony, probably with Polish cabinet members looking on, when U/S Tauscher comes to Warsaw December 10 for the Security Cooperation Consultation Group (SCCG). The Ambassador pushed for a December 10 signing, noting that it was not clear when another such opportunity might arise. The Foreign Minister did not mention Prime Minister Tusk having approved the SoFA text, as required, but left the strong impression that he believed Tusk had or was about to do so.

INCREASING U.S. PRESENCE IN POLAND

13. (C) Sikorski asked how the U.S. and NATO would provide Poland with the "strategic assurance" the Vice President mentioned in his public statement during his October 22 visit to Warsaw. Sikorski said it was important to increase the U.S. presence in Poland although he acknowledged that there

will not be a large U.S. deployment of troops. Of the options described at the October 15 High-Level Defense Group (Reftel), Sikorski said the GoP consensus view was that the rotation of F-16s would be the best form of an enhanced U.S. presence, of those presented at the High-Level Defense Group on October 15.

¶4. (C) U.S. strategic assurance is needed because of Polish concerns about Russia, Sikorski hinted. He said that in the event of a Russian attack against Crimea or another part of Ukraine, Poland would find it difficult to stand by. Although he recognized that the probability of such an attack was low, he alluded to Soviet actions in 1956, when Moscow took advantage of U.S. distraction in the Middle East by sending Soviet tanks into Budapest.

¶5. (C) Sikorski said he greatly appreciated a recent DVC on Afghanistan that he held with National Security Advisor Jones, along with representatives of other Allied governments. He called for more of these regular consultations. On energy security cooperation, Sikorski said he supports U.S. firms interested in investing in shale gas in Poland, and offered to speak at a meeting or conference of industry representatives on the topic that Post could host.

WHAT DOES THE USG THINK OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES?

¶6. (C) Democracy promotion, through the Community of Democracies (CD) secretariat based in Warsaw, is another area in which the Poles seek to cooperate. Sikorski asked what the U.S. position on CD was, noting that he would not like

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the Polish Government to push for something that lacks a high-level U.S. role. He said CD meetings could include panel discussions on the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative. Sikorski repeated the invitation to President Obama to attend next year's event in Krakow marking the CD's tenth anniversary, adding that Secretary Clinton would also be a welcome representative of the U.S. He asked for an early read on the likely level of U.S. participation.

¶7. (C) Sikorski asked whether it would be possible to schedule Prime Minister Tusk's visit to Washington in the first quarter of 2010, since he said the GoP knows the U.S. would like to avoid hosting a visit too close to Poland's October 2010 presidential elections. Sikorski also asked to hold a bilateral meeting with the Secretary on the margins of the December 3-4 NATO Ministerial. He said he had taken a beating in the Polish press when the Secretary had to cancel a November 4 meeting in Washington due to the extension of her Middle East trip. The Ambassador indicated that Sikorski's downplaying of the cancelled Washington meeting was viewed positively in Washington.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Foreign Minister Sikorski has a flair for the dramatic, but in this meeting his manner was businesslike, and even modest. The tone was in keeping with the message. After previous public statements about his SoFA redlines, such as barring "unfair advantages" for U.S. contractors, Sikorski appeared to signal his and his government's acceptance of the compromise language related to U.S. contractors.
FEINSTEIN